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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003345

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: SALAH AD DIN PROVINCIAL OFFICIAL DISCUSSES BAATH  
PARTY AND COMING PARTY CONVENTION

Classified by Charles O. Blaha, Deputy Political Counselor,  
for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: Salah ad Din Province Vice Governor Abdullah  
¶H. M. Ejbarah claims the Baath Party is planning to hold a  
national convention in Salah ad Din province before the end  
of the year to begin the party's reintegration into Iraq's  
political process. The party will expel Saddam to  
demonstrate that the party is ready to participate  
democratically. Ejbarah expects that many of the party's  
senior leaders in Iraq and in exile will attend, representing  
what he claimed are the party's four million supporters. PRT  
Salah ad Din assesses Ejbarah as a central figure to the  
political process in the Sunni and former Baathist heartland  
of Salah ad Din Province. His proposed Baath Party  
reunification is at odds with the current strong national  
consensus that some form of de-baathification should go  
forward, but continuing to exclude Baathists who support  
democracy from the politics may cause them to subvert the  
process or resort to violence. END SUMMARY.

#### Bringing Back the Baath Party

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¶2. (S) In a carefully constructed argument, Salah ad Din  
(SaD) Vice Governor Abdullah H. M. Ejbarah described both the  
desire and the need to re-integrate the Baath Party into the  
political process in a meeting with poloffs in Baghdad on  
September 8. Ejbarah said the Baath Party is still very  
active in all parts of the country, including the south, and  
that among the party's 4 million supporters are many Shia.  
He said he is in daily contact with all of the party's  
regional leaders.

#### National Convention

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¶3. (S) Ejbarah said the party is planning to have a national,  
all-inclusive convention before the end of the year in Salah  
ad Din, to include party leaders and members from all three  
regions and in exile. In discussing the way forward, Ejbarah  
has told the party members that there are three essential  
elements that they must embrace: publicly condemn/reject  
Saddam Hussein and Izzat Al Douri, isolating remaining  
supporters and stating clearly there will be no return to  
supporting that regime's policies; condemn/forbid insurgent  
activity, against both Iraqis and CF, recognizing any such  
activity as a terrorist act against Iraq; and embrace the  
new, democratic political process. He seemed confident that  
the party leaders and rank-and-file would agree to these  
pre-conditions.

On Saddam

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14. (S) Additionally, he said the party must officially expel Saddam. Ejbarah said that when Saddam hid from the CF, he went "from a dictator to a mouse," losing favor in the eyes of the people. Recently, however, Saddam has been becoming more popular through his impassioned speeches in the court room. In Ejbarah,s thinking, if the party officially expels Saddam, it will demonstrate in a tangible way to Iraqis and to CF that the party has changed and is ready to participate in the democratic political process. In separate conversations with the SaD PRT Leader, Ejbarah has said that Izzat al Douri must also be expelled; he stated that much of the financing of insurgent activity is linked to al Douri.

Re-Thinking De-Baathification  
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15. (S) Ejbarah said the CF had been ill-advised to pursue de-baathification in what he claims was a rigid way, because it has cut an important part of the population out of the political process. He predicted that Iraq's new political authorities will keep these reformed Baathists out of government but that allowing this to happen would not be representative of "the whole political spectrum." He characterized the recent reconciliation meeting of tribal leaders as calling for the Baath Party to remain in existence. (NOTE: The conference's final declaration merely called for re-evaluation of the de-baathification process. END NOTE.)

16. (S) According to Ejbarah, the only way to prevent civil war, division of Iraq, and increased Iranian influence is to

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bring the Baath Party back into the political fold.

Comment  
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17. (S) PRT Salah ad Din assesses Ejbarah as politically savvy, straight-talking, and central to the political process in the Sunni and former Baathist heartland of Salah ad Din Province. His views are representative of other Sunni leaders who are keen to re-engage in the political process. However, his idea to reintegrate using the Baath Party as his vehicle is at odds with the current strong national consensus that some form of de-baathification should go forward. At present, it does not appear that GOI leaders intend to change many of the de-baathification policies in place, leaving little maneuver room for Ejbarah and his colleagues.

18. (S) This will be problematic. Those who support democracy but continue to see themselves excluded from their country's formal political process will be hard-pressed to rein in the disaffected who may eventually believe that alternative means, including subverting the process or resorting to violence, are the only ones left to them. END COMMENT.  
SPECKHARD